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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000359

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN FACTIONS BEGIN RECONCILIATION PROCESS  
IN CAIRO TALKS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. The Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, released a joint statement in Cairo February 26 following the opening of reconciliation talks. The statement said that five committees will seek to complete this work between March 10 and 30. Fatah and Hamas officials indicated a willingness to compromise during the talks. End Summary.

FACTIONS TASK JOINT COMMITTEES TO  
REFORM PALESTINIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE  
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12. (U) Following discussions between 13 Palestinian parties in Cairo February 26, the factions released a statement in which they agreed to begin work in five committees to achieve a comprehensive Palestinian political reconciliation. There will be a sixth, non-factional committee including Arab League officials to oversee the work. The committees are scheduled to reconvene on March 10 and take 20 days (until March 30) to complete their work. The five committees and their responsibilities are:

1A. a committee for PA government formation, responsible for determining the composition of a new, national unity government (NUG);

1B. a committee for PASF reform, responsible for restructuring the security services into professional, non-factional organizations;

1C. a committee for PLO reform, responsible for reorganizing the institutions of the PLO per the Cairo Agreement to include all Palestinian factions;

1D. a committee for PA elections, responsible for preparing to hold presidential and PLC elections; and

1E. a committee for internal reconciliation, responsible for promoting a culture of tolerance, democracy, and mutual acceptance among Palestinians.

The statement also said the factions have agreed to release political detainees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and cease provocative media campaigns.

HAMAS OFFICIALS STAKE OUT POSITIONS  
ON POLITICAL PLATFORM, RESISTANCE  
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13. (U) Hamas officials said publicly that they hoped the national dialogue would lead to real reconciliation and not be used as a political tool by any faction. Gaza-based "Prime Minister" Ismail Haniya called national unity a "top priority." In a veiled reference to the Quartet conditions, he said that Hamas would only accept a NUG that is not subject to foreign pressure, and that the NUG must maintain

the Palestinians' "right to resist." He also said the committees must reform the PLO "on a democratic basis" to represent all Palestinians.

FATAH OFFICIALS ENCOURAGED BY HAMAS'S FLEXIBILITY  
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14. (C) Senior Fatah officials on February 26 told PolSpec that Hamas demonstrated an encouraging flexibility in its positions during the Cairo meeting. Former Fatah PLC member Qaddura Faris said that Hamas officials signaled that they are willing to make compromises with Fatah and other factions in the interest of Palestinian national objectives. He said the Cairo meeting initiated a "special momentum" that might enable Fatah and Hamas to overcome obstacles that previously prevented reform and cooperation. Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Jibril Rajub said that Egyptian pressure on Hamas could help neutralize Iran's influence in the Gaza Strip, allowing the group some flexibility in its position vis-a-vis Fatah.

COMMENT  
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15. (C) In spite of the optimism expressed in public statements, the March 30 deadline for completing reconciliation and determining the composition of a new government is ambitious. While conditions in Gaza put pressure on both sides to cooperate, Fatah and Hamas have not yet agreed on any details within this framework. PASF and PLO reform are both long-term projects, even if details can be decided within a month. As the factions discuss the new

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government's political platform, Fatah officials will be anxious to understand USG views on a new unity government.  
End Comment.

WALLES